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Review of the implementation of the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016)

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Note by the secretariat

Summary

In the Ministerial Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, which was adopted by the Ministerial Conference on Transport at its second session, held in Bangkok from 12 to 16 March 2012, member States recognized the need for long-term commitment and continuity in addressing critical issues in the transport sector to support economic growth, improve living standards and increase the competitiveness of economies of the region. Towards this end, the Conference adopted the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016), and the Regional Strategic Framework for the Facilitation of International Road Transport, both of which were subsequently endorsed by the Commission at its sixty-eighth session through resolution 68/4 of 23 May 2012.

The present document contains highlights of major activities implemented under phase II of the Regional Action Programme from October 2013 to June 2014,[1] as well as information on activities planned during the current biennium. The present document should be read in conjunction with information paper E/ESCAP/CTR(4)/INF/4 on activities implemented under the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016).

The Committee may wish to review the activities described in the present document and share information on progress in their countries in the implementation of the Regional Action Programme, phase II.

* E/ESCAP/CTR(4)/L.1.

[1] Activities implemented between 2012 and September 2013 are described in documents E/ESCAP/FAMT(2)/1 and E/ESCAP/CTR(3)/1.

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I. Introduction

1. The Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016) was adopted by the Ministerial Conference on Transport, which was held in Bangkok in March 2012. Since its adoption, ESCAP members and associate members have worked together with the secretariat and other development partners to achieve their shared vision of a sustainable international integrated intermodal transport and logistics system for the region. The present document updates those States on the progress made between October 2013 and June 2014 in implementation of the Regional Action Programme.

2. Activities have been primarily guided by the 10 thematic areas of the Regional Action Programme, namely: (a) policy guidance at the ministerial level; (b) transport infrastructure development; (c) transport facilitation; (d) transport logistics; (e) finance and private sector participation; (f) road safety; (g) sustainable transport development; (h) transport and the Millennium Development Goals; (i) inter-island shipping; and (j) connecting subregional transport networks. The present document should be read in conjunction with information paper E/ESCAP/CTR(4)/INF/4 on activities implemented under the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016).

II. Progress made in implementation of the Regional Action Programme, phase II (2012-2016)

A. Policy guidance at the ministerial level

Immediate objective: to promote regional cooperation and policy leadership at the ministerial level for the advancement of transport as a key to regional development.

3. In recognition of the crucial role played by the transport sector in the economic and social development of the region, the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport was established as a regional mechanism to facilitate greater cooperation among transport policymakers in Asia. Ministers of transport and those from related ministries gathered in Bangkok from 4 to 8 November 2013 for the second session of the Forum. The meeting was attended by 168 representatives, including 22 ministerial-level officials from 26 members of the Commission and 1 non-member, as well as representatives of United Nations and other international organizations, non-governmental organizations and private sector associations from Asia and the Pacific.

4. The participants in the Forum reviewed progress achieved in implementation of the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016) and deliberated on the emerging issues affecting the development of transport in the region. The meeting culminated in the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration on Transport as a Key to Sustainable Development and Regional Integration, which contains a broad framework for the future direction of the secretariat's work. In adopting the Declaration, the ministers made a strong commitment to the development and implementation of transport policies and strategies at the national and regional levels that will support sustainable development and regional integration.

B. Transport infrastructure development

Immediate objective: to promote regional and interregional connectivity and cooperation through the further development and upgrading of the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks, as well as Euro-Asian transport linkages and dry ports.

5. Following several years of negotiation, the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports was adopted during the sixty-ninth session of the Commission in 2013 through resolution 69/7. The agreement was then opened for signature at a signing ceremony held on 7 November 2013 during the second session of the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport.

6. To date, a total of 15 member States[2] have signed the agreement. The Government of Thailand deposited an instrument of ratification, becoming the first country to ratify the agreement during the signing ceremony. In 2014, the Republic of Korea also became a party to the agreement, ratifying it on 22 April, thus bringing the number of parties to the agreement to two.

7. The agreement will enter into force when at least eight countries have become parties through ratification, acceptance, approval or accession. Upon its entry into force, the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports, together with the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network and the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network, will serve as comprehensive regional cooperation mechanisms for coordinated and harmonized development of an integrated intermodal transport and logistics system in the region.

8. The secretariat also implemented the project entitled "Capacity-building for the development and operation of dry ports of international importance", with funding from the Russian Federation. Under that project,

[2] Armenia; Cambodia; China; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Lao People's Democratic Republic; Mongolia; Myanmar; Nepal; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Sri Lanka, Tajikistan; Thailand; and Viet Nam.

the secretariat conducted case studies/best practices on the development and operation of dry ports both within and outside the region. Based on the study, policy guidelines on planning and development of dry ports were prepared to assist transport policymakers in the region. The study findings and policy guidelines were used as inputs into a series of subregional meetings for capacity-building in 2013 and 2014.

9. With regard to the Asian Highway Network, the secretariat organized the fifth meeting of the Working Group on the Asian Highway in Bangkok on 7 and 8 October 2013, which adopted amendments to annex I of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network that had been proposed by Cambodia, the Philippines and Viet Nam.[3] In conjunction with the fifth meeting of that working group, the secretariat held the Asian Highway Investment Forum in Bangkok on 8 and 9 October 2013. The outcome of the prefeasibility studies for the Asian Highway sections in Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia and Myanmar, conducted under the project entitled "Promotion of investment in the Asian Highway Network: prefeasibility studies of priority sections", with funding support from the Korea Expressway Corporation, were presented and discussed.

10. Development of the Trans-Asian Railway continues to benefit member States by enhancing connectivity and facilitating trade within the region. The third meeting of the Working Group on the Trans-Asian Railway Network was held in Bangkok on 5 and 6 November 2013. The meeting adopted amendments to annex I of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network, which had been proposed by Georgia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam.[4]

11. With funding support from the Government of the Russian Federation, the ESCAP-developed point-to-point rail-costing model was updated, and a new user's manual has been developed.

12. In response to a request from the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the secretariat has been collaborating with Moscow State University of Railway Engineering to organize in Moscow in late 2014 a capacity-building course for railway officials from that country; the focus will be on the transition of locomotives from direct electric traction to alternating current.

13. The United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia Project Working Group on Transport and Border-Crossing has proven to be an effective platform for regional cooperation and knowledge-sharing since its launch in 1998. In cooperation with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the secretariat provided assistance to the Ministry of Transport and Communications of Kazakhstan in organizing the nineteenth session of that working group in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in June 2014.

C. Transport facilitation

Immediate objective: to promote efficient and smooth movement of goods, passengers and vehicles by road and rail across the region, including at border crossings.

[3] See E/ESCAP/AHWG(5)/4, chap. II.

[4] See E/ESCAP/TARN/WG(3)/4, chap. II.

14. Under the Regional Strategic Framework for the Facilitation of International Road Transport, the Regional Network of Legal and Technical Experts on Transport Facilitation was established. To date, a total of 88 applications have been received from experts on transport facilitation in 28 countries. The first meeting of the Regional Network of Legal and Technical Experts on Transport Facilitation was held in Phuket, Thailand, on 10 and 11 February 2014, to formally launch the network and discuss its future activities.

15. With funding from the Government of the Russian Federation, a preliminary study report on a regional framework for cooperation to facilitate international railway transport was completed by the secretariat and will be reviewed in an expert group meeting in September 2014. It will be further discussed at a regional meeting on facilitation of international railway transport scheduled to be held in December 2014. In December 2013, the major results of the preliminary study were published in the first edition of the *Monograph Series on Transport Facilitation of International Railway Transport in Asia and the Pacific* (ST/ESCAP/2681).

16. Following the success of the first policy dialogue to strengthen transport connectivity in South and South-West Asia, held in Dhaka in June 2013, the second policy dialogue took place in Lahore, Pakistan, on 9 and 10 December 2013. The Policy Dialogue on Economic and Transport Development in Border Areas in Eastern South Asia was held in Shillong, India, on 4 and 5 December 2013, in cooperation with the government of the State of Meghalaya, India, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

17. In cooperation with ADB, the secretariat contributed to a series of national training workshops on integrated and sustainable trade and transport facilitation monitoring mechanisms (TTFMM) in: Bhutan, 10-15 March 2014; Nepal, 15-17 April 2014; and Bangladesh, 28 and 29 April 2014. These were held to equip the national study teams with skills and knowledge on the key components of TTFMM, including the time/cost-distance methodology developed by the secretariat.

18. The secretariat, in collaboration with ADB, co-organized a workshop on secure and efficient cross-border transport for the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation programme in Bangkok from 9 to 11 October 2013 to promote the application of the transport facilitation models developed by the secretariat. This was followed by national workshops held in Bhutan in January 2014 and in India in March 2014 to discuss practical application of the ESCAP Secure Cross-border Transport Model. The workshops supported the pilot application of the model to transport of Bhutanese transit goods through India.

19. Under a project involving ESCAP, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development that is aimed at improving the efficiency of control authorities and transport operators of cross-border transport in landlocked and transit developing countries, the secretariat organized the First Corridor Meeting of Clusters for Transport Facilitation in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan; it was held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in February 2014. The final meeting is scheduled to be held in Bishkek in August 2014.

20. The secretariat continued to support the formulation of an agreement on facilitation of international road transport involving the member Governments of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The Executive Secretary of ESCAP attended the Prime Ministers Meeting of the

Shanghai Cooperation Organization Member States in Tashkent in November 2013 to promote the signing of the agreement and enhance collaboration between ESCAP and SCO.

21. As a part of its efforts to formulate and implement transport facilitation measures, the secretariat organized in Beijing on 22 and 23 April 2014 the first consultation meeting on the legal instrument for operationalizing transit transport along the Asian Highway. The next such meeting is expected to be held in Incheon, Republic of Korea, in October 2014.

D. Transport logistics

Immediate objective: to assist countries in developing transport logistics policies and in enhancing the professionalism and competence of logistics service providers.

22. The secretariat has continued to collaborate with national freight forwarders, multimodal transport operators and logistics service providers in Asia and the Pacific through the exchange of knowledge and good practices. As part of this effort, two meetings were organized in Beijing, in June 2014: the annual Regional Conference/Forum of Freight Forwarders, Multimodal Transport Operators and Logistics Service Providers; and the Meeting of Chief Executives of National Associations of Freight Forwarders, Multimodal Transport Operators and Logistics Service Providers.

23. The secretariat, together with the Cambodia Freight Forwarders Association, organized in Phnom Penh from 18 to 20 December 2013 a training-of-trainers workshop on logistics and supply chain management for freight forwarders. In collaboration with the Myanmar International Freight Forwarders Association and the Singapore Aviation Academy, a training course for shippers, shipper's agents and freight forwarders was organized in Yangon from 28 October to 1 November 2013; it was focused on the carriage of dangerous goods by air in order to enhance the capacity of the logistics industry to handle dangerous goods and promote safety and security in transport in the region.

24. Under the project entitled "Regional development of efficient and effective logistics systems" supported by the Government of China, the secretariat is continuing to prepare a regional study on the use of integrated logistics information service systems, drawing on the recommendations of the Regional Seminar on Development of Efficient and Effective Logistics Systems, which was held in Hangzhou, China, on 7 and 8 May 2013. Two expert group meetings were held in 2014: one in Beijing in March; the other in Seoul in May. The final expert group meeting is scheduled to be held in Bangkok in October 2014, and a regional meeting is expected to be held in December 2014.

25. Following publication in 2011 of the *Guidelines for Minimum Standards and Codes of Professional Conduct for Freight Forwarders, Non-Vessel Operating Common Carriers and Multimodal Transport Operators*, the secretariat carried out additional research on the particular characteristics and challenges emerging for non-traditional logistics service providers. Based on that research, analytical mapping of the complex services and roles played by modern logistics service providers was produced, and the *Guide to Key Issues in Development of Logistics Policy* was published in December 2013.

E. Finance and private sector participation

Immediate objective: to promote regional cooperation between the public and private sectors for financing and maintaining infrastructure.

26. In support of Commission resolution 69/6 on implementation of the Tehran Declaration to promote public-private partnerships in infrastructure development in Asia and the Pacific for sustainable development, the secretariat started to develop case studies on public-private partnership (PPP) projects in the Asia-Pacific region in 2014. The first case study on traffic demand risk in PPPs, illustrated by the Bangkok Mass Transit System, has been published online.[5] The secretariat has also updated and stored various resources on PPPs, including information on PPP units and programmes in Asia and the Pacific, a PPP readiness self-assessment tool and a free online course on PPPs, all of which are available on the ESCAP website.[6]

27. The secretariat has also initiated a United Nations Development Account project on building the capacity of Bhutan, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar in designing and managing public-private partnerships for infrastructure development. The secretariat undertook preparatory missions to Bhutan (25-26 February), the Lao People's Democratic Republic (13-14 March), Myanmar (26-28 March) and Cambodia (28-30 April) to consult with officials on activities to be organized under the project. National public-private forums and a subregional workshop on PPPs for South-East Asia are planned for the second half of 2014.

F. Road safety

Immediate objective: to assist countries in the region in meeting their commitments under the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020.

28. In line with the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 and in support of Commission resolution 66/6 on improving road safety in Asia and the Pacific, the secretariat cooperated with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in organizing in New Delhi in December 2013 the first Europe-Asia Road Safety Forum. Participants discussed the major United Nations road safety-related conventions and shared interregional experiences, including on recent progress on road safety in their countries.[7]

29. With support from the Asian Institute of Technology in Bangkok, the secretariat conducted a training programme from 10 February to 6 March 2014 on road safety and traffic management for officials of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Participating in the course were 10 officials and experts from that country's Ministry of Land and Environment Protection and other relevant departments and agencies. The officials indicated that the training course helped enhance their knowledge on designing and planning safer roads and effective traffic management measures.

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[5] www.unescap.org/resources/ppp-case-study.

[6] www.unescap.org/our-work/transport/financing-and-private-sector-participation/resources.

[7] An update on the road safety situation in several countries is available at www.unescap.org/ttdw/roadsafety/RegionalProgress2013/RegionalProgress2013.asp.

30. The secretariat participated in the Policy and Donor Forum 2014, which was held in Melbourne, Australia, from 5 to 7 May 2014, in support of the Decade of Action. Senior policymakers and private sector representatives from across Asia and the Pacific took part in the Forum to discuss relevant issues related to road safety, including strategies for scaling up road safety interventions in the region, and sustainable development in the development agenda beyond 2015. The secretariat was represented in a discussion panel, and the audience was informed of the ongoing discussion on the development agenda beyond 2015, including targets for road safety. The priorities for the region would be presented as inputs for the second Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety, which will be hosted by Brazil in late 2015.

G. Sustainable transport development

Immediate objective: to increase awareness and understanding of alternative freight transport policy options that can reduce energy consumption and emissions.

31. The secretariat continues to provide assistance to member countries in establishing sustainable transport systems. In this regard, a regional expert group meeting on policy options for sustainable transport development was organized in November 2013 in Incheon, Republic of Korea, to share experiences on policy options for sustainable transport development. The meeting served as an avenue for collaboration and partnerships among development partners, international experts and country representatives. The secretariat is finalizing a study on policy options for sustainable transport development, covering sustainable transport policies related to general transport, urban transport and maritime transport.

32. The secretariat is also preparing a series of policy position briefs on sustainable transport, including integrated transport planning, public transport and non-motorized transport. Future issues of these briefs will cover such topics as road safety, rural transport and the Millennium Development Goals, maintenance policies/asset management and public-private partnerships.

33. In order to build the capacities of national and municipal government officials, the secretariat is also currently planning to hold during the second half of 2014 a series of national workshops on sustainable and inclusive transport development. The workshops will be aimed at raising awareness and showcasing various policy options for sustainable and inclusive transport development. A regional expert group meeting is also planned which would summarize the lessons learned from the workshops and recommend future actions.

34. The secretariat is continuing to promote the use of the emission assessment model known as ForFITS (For Future Inland Transport Systems) to evaluate mitigation policy options developed through a United Nations Development Account project. In this respect, the model was presented to members of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation during its second Carbon Footprint Workshop held in Kunming, China, on 20 May 2014.

35. The secretariat is also collaborating with the United Nations Centre for Regional Development and the German Agency for International Cooperation to promote green freight and logistics policies in member countries and to develop a regional framework on green freight and logistics.

H. Transport and the Millennium Development Goals

Immediate objective: to encourage the inclusion of Millennium Development Goal considerations in the planning and implementation of regional transport interventions.

36. Transport infrastructure and services play an important role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, as they provide physical access to domestic and international markets, jobs and social services. Funding for the United Nations Development Account project entitled "Strengthening capacities in countries with special needs on designing and implementing economic and social development policies to accelerate progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals" was received in late 2013. In this regard, a series of sectoral and country case studies is being prepared on cross-sectoral collaboration to achieve the Goals in selected least developed countries. A project inception workshop was held in May 2014 that highlighted the commitment of member States to cross-sectoral initiatives and emphasized the role of access and transport services.

I. Inter-island shipping

Immediate objective: to assist in identifying possible approaches to enhancing the regularity, reliability and affordability of the shipping services of archipelagic and island developing countries.

37. Following the adoption of the Suva Declaration on Improving Maritime Transport and Related Services in the Pacific[8] by the High-level Meeting on Strengthening Inter-island Shipping and Logistics in the Pacific Island Countries, which was held in Suva from 23 to 25 July 2013, the secretariat began seeking funding support for implementation of further activities in support of the Declaration.

J. Connecting subregional transport networks

Immediate objective: to identify physical and non-physical constraints to inter-subregional connectivity and to provide a platform for building closer collaboration among subregional entities in the development of transport.

38. A comparative study on major subregional agreements in the region was completed in 2013 with the involvement of national experts and members of the Regional Network of Legal and Technical Experts on Transport Facilitation. The study was presented at a seminar held in February 2014 on legal aspects of inter-subregional connectivity.

39. In cooperation with the ESCAP Subregional Office for South and South-West Asia and the Subregional Office for North and Central Asia, the secretariat is planning to implement a United Nations Development Account project entitled "Strengthening connectivity of countries in South and Central Asia, particularly landlocked and least developed countries, to link with subregional and regional transport and trade networks".

III. Issues for consideration

40. Delegations are invited to review the activities described in the present document and inform the Committee of progress, at the national and regional levels, in implementation of the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016).

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[8] See E/ESCAP/FAMT(2)/6.